

THE LIGHTNING VOLUTE

ERICUSA FULGETRA Sowerby

By BERNARD C. COTTON,* F.R.Z.S.,
Curator of Molluscs, South Australian Museum.

The "Lightning Volute" *Ericusa fulgetra* of South Australia is keenly sought after by collectors. It was first named, described and figured in colour by Sowerby, 1825, in the Sale Catalogue of the Earl of Tankerville's collection—the only specimen then known—and it is now in the British Museum. The specimen is No. 2149 in the catalogue, and in our copy the price, £31/10/-, is written against it. Sowerby, 1847, *Thes. Conch.*, 1, p. 207, sp. 35, pl. 47, fig. 33, 34, again describes and figures the species without locality. Reeve, 1849, was the first to give the locality, "South Australia," incorrectly quoting Broderip, 1826, as the author of the species. Like many volutes, the mature shell varies in size, ranging from three inches to eight inches in length. It has been found right along the South Australian coast in shallow water, crawling on sand banks, but it is much more common on Yorke Peninsula and on the west coast of South Australia, particularly about Port Lincoln.

One rare variety somewhat different in shape has been found in the Great Australian Bight in 120 fathoms, inside the Western Australian border. Between Coobowie and Wool Bay, on the east coast of Yorke Peninsula, the tides sometimes form a sand-bar, which is exposed at a very low tide to the heat of the sun. When the sea begins to cover the bar, as the tide rises, these volutes and also such shell as the "False Helmet" (*Hypocassis bicarinata*) and "Lyre Shells" (*Lyria mitraeformis*) emerge from the sand. A dozen or so "Lightning Volutes" have been taken in a few hours. The late Sir Joseph Verco described eight varieties of this remarkable Volute shell.

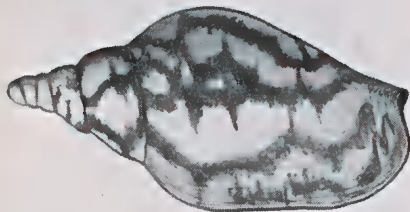
The typical "Lightning Volute" is not found in deeper waters where specimens are usually found of the *dictua*, *lunisligata* or *connectens* varieties. There is some variation in shape, but the plate reproduced here shows the respective colour patterns.

An interesting specimen taken by Jim Veitch starts off in life as a typical *E. fulgetra lunisligata*, but after an accidental break in the shell, it continues as a typical *E. fulgetra*. This change in colour scheme frequently occurs in variable patterned shells following a repair after damage.

* Adelaide, South Australia.

EXPLANATION OF PLATE.

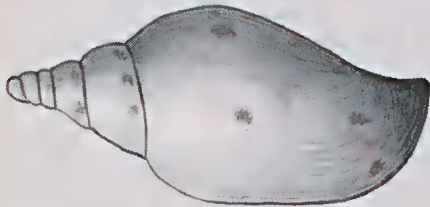
- Fig. 1. *The Lightning Volute*, *Ericusa fulgetra* Sowerby. Typical, axially flamed.
- Fig. 2. *The Crescent Volute*, variety *lunisligata* Verco, 1912, with two spirals of large crescentic or arrow-headed spots.
- Fig. 3. *The Spotted Volute*, variety *punctisligata* Verco, 1912, with two rows of small spots.
- Fig. 4. *The Two Banded Volute*, variety *bicineta* Verco, 1912, with two spiral bands only.
- Fig. 5. *The Three Banded Volute*, variety *tricineta* Verco, with three spiral bands.
- Fig. 6. *The One Banded Volute*, variety *unicineta* Verco, 1912, with only a lower spiral band present.
- Fig. 7. *The White Volute*, variety *alba* Verco, 1912.
- Fig. 8. *The Connected Volute*, variety *connectens* Verco, 1912, with two continuous spiral bands crossing the normal axial flames.
This is a rare variety, usually very small in mature size. Here is figured the largest and best specimen ever seen, six and a quarter inches long, dredged alive by Mr. J. Veitch at Port Lincoln.
- Fig. 9. *The Net Volute*, variety *dictua* Verco, 1909. The type was taken in a cray-pot off Granite Island, Port Victor. It is not infrequently obtained under similar circumstances in the same locality. It has a delicate, lace-like pattern instead of the bold zig-zag axials of the typical variety.
- Fig. 10. *The Boat Volute*, *Ericusa orca* Cotton, 1952. This is the rare, deep water relative of *E. fulgetra* from the Great Australian Bight. It is differently shaped from the typical *E. fulgetra*.



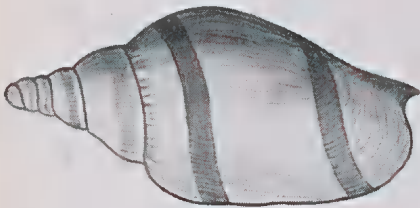
1.



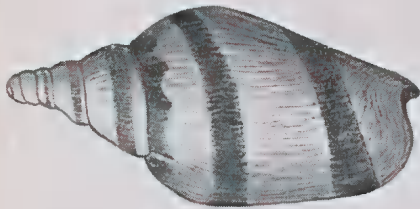
2.



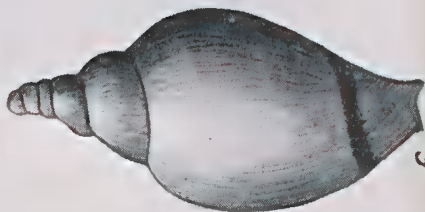
3.



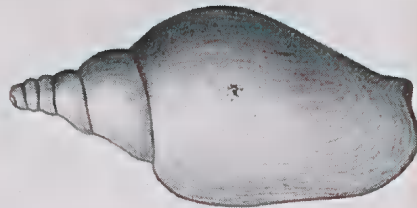
4.



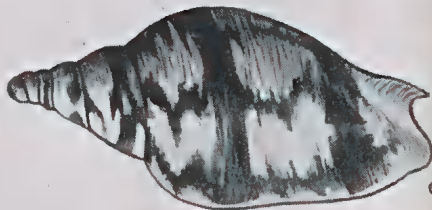
5.



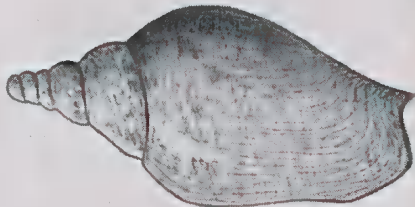
6.



7.



8.



9.



10.

Audinet C.